

The Essayan Statue

An Audacious Hazard of Nikolai, Independent Agent, as Related by His Lieutenant, Summers
By H. M. EGBERT

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I like to remember interludes in Nikolai's series of conspiracies and vengeance, when he allowed his subtle humor to play like a lambent flame about his imagination, when tragedy turned comedy and success was not purchased by tears. The case of the Essayan statue well illustrates the lighter side of Nikolai's nature.

Everybody in Boston came to know Essayan after he formed the famous combination in corn. He must have made millions; and from the humble post of editor of a little revolutionary Armenian sheet, he became one of the city's leading bankers. Simultaneously his views underwent a change, as Nikolai discovered when he called on him.

"What?" shouted Essayan. "Contribute fifty thousand dollars to the revolutionary party? You must be crazy."

"Six months ago," said Nikolai thoughtfully, "you were bawling for vengeance upon Russia through the columns of your newspaper, and begging subscriptions from your Armenian compatriots against the tyrant of your country."

Essayan stroked his paunch, chuckling. "Maybe I did," he admitted. "But now I am a millionaire. My views have changed."

Nikolai looked round. We were seated in Essayan's private museum, to which he stored his statues. Essayan had gone in for culture. His collection must have been worth millions. Treasures of Greece and Rome adorned his galleries; there was an original Venus of Praxiteles, a Hermes by Phidias; bas-reliefs and friezes had been stripped for the banker from many an ancient temple. Nikolai frowned angrily.

"You must have spent five millions on that collection of yours," he said.

"Twelve millions," said Essayan severely. "And all old, broken things at that. They tell me that my Hermes hadn't a head. They tell me that they're just as valuable when every statue has some part missing. I don't understand it myself—but they cost twelve millions."

Nikolai led him on to talk of his new hobby. It was evident that the Armenian took only a shadowy interest in the art side of his collection. He did not, in fact, remember whether it was his Apollo that had the missing arm or his Jupiter whose leg was gone. "But Berg knows," said the banker. "Berg's my art expert in London, and what he says goes. He's sending me a sample of old Egyptian mummies that's going to cost me half a million."

"Now, Mr. Essayan," said Nikolai, "if you can spare twelve millions for your confounded art hobby you can give me fifty thousand for the Armenian cause."

"Yet I'll wager you that before the year is out I'll sell you one of your own statues out of this gallery for three times the amount I've asked you."

"No, you won't," answered the banker placidly, "because I know you, and from this moment my museum's going to be bolted and barred and guarded, and nobody's going to enter. See?"

Nikolai could with difficulty restrain his indignation when we were outside. "The selfish hog!" he muttered. "He spends twelve millions on that stuff when fifty thousand would rebuild those villages that the Russians burned last year, leaving hundreds of his countrymen homeless. Well, Summers, we'll win three times that amount and teach the scoundrel a lesson."

"Nikolai," I said, "I confess that breaking into a banker's house in Boston does not appeal to me. It isn't feasible. This is America, and what can be done in Europe won't go here."

"I'll do the breaking in," said Nikolai. "Or, rather, I shall be carried into the gallery in state and requested to spend the night there alone by Mr. Essayan. All you will be required to do will be to catch the statue in a blanket when I throw it out."

I knew that some audacious scheme had already been devised by my companion, but Nikolai refused to deliver himself of it. The year had several months to run and for two months we did nothing, except occasionally to wander in the neighborhood of the banker's house. Once we encountered Essayan as he was leaving his front door.

"Hat!" he snorted. "When are you going to sell me my own statue, what?" He led us back into the house. "Look!" he said. "You shall be warmly welcomed, gentlemen."

The door that led to the museum had been secured with iron bars, each of which terminated in a padlock. Essayan showed us a series of electric wires.

"They communicate with the police department, the private watchman's office, my own room, and the fire department. I shall expect you—soon!"

"Some time this year," Nikolai answered. "Have you got your cargo of mummies yet, Mr. Essayan?"

"Next month I expect them," answered the banker. "Now shoot! Go away. You make me feel tired."

On the following Saturday Nikolai and I sailed for England. It was on shipboard that he unfolded his plans.

"We must anticipate those mummies," he said. "Now, Summers, to let in a light upon your brain, I intend to enter Essayan's house disguised as an Egyptian king."

"A mummy?" I asked, bewildered.

"Yes. Mummies can be procured easily in London. I shall simply remove the body, wrap myself in the spiced windings, enclosing a very modern piece of papyrus recounting the history of my undertaking, bore a neat breathing hole in the case, and ship myself to Boston. You will take me in your stateroom on the voyage back, and I trust that you will let me out of my case at times for a little fresh air and exercise. The difficult part will be after we reach Boston harbor. I shall prepare for a stay of twenty-four hours or more at the custom house by making myself inescapable with opium or some drug, to while away the time and prevent a feeling of cramp from lying in my case. I shall be consigned to Mr. Essayan, our fat Armenian friend, and I have no doubt that he will consider me to be from Berg, his art expert on the other side, and welcome me with open arms. Of course he will deposit me in his museum, where I hope to accomplish my undertaking."

"But Essayan will recognize the statue," I objected.

"Neither Essayan nor Berg himself will recognize it," Nikolai answered. "We readily procured a mummy in London, and, on the night before our return journey, Nikolai gave me my final instructions."

"All you will have to do," he said, "will be to wait at the back of the house with a blanket and catch what I shall throw out to you. You will have a pony trap in waiting—or perhaps it would be still better to be in the guise of the collector of waste from barrels. In this way you will not be under suspicion. You will wait, of course, until the watchman has made his round; then I shall throw down the statue."

We unwrapped the mummy from its fastenings. I confess it was a somewhat gruesome undertaking, and when finally we stood looking down upon the features of that ancient Egyptian, I detected in it an uncanny resemblance to Nikolai.

There was the same high forehead, the same eagle nose; moreover, the proportions, shrunken though they were, were little short of Nikolai's. He laughed.

"Reincarnation?" he said, smiling down on the grotesque thing. "Well, if so, my worthy ancestor in the flesh, we shall put you to good purpose."

We left the mummy in our rooms—there was no way to dispose of it—and Nikolai got into the box. I wrapped the windings round him and placed a pillow beneath his head. Then, having bored a number of holes in the case, which I rubbed with a pigment to make them appear as though they were the product of time, I put on the lid.

"How do you feel?" I asked.

"Well, but stuffy," came Nikolai's answer faintly from within the case. Then he called to me to raise the lid.

"For heaven's sake do not forget to lay by a goodly supply of food for my use in your stateroom," he said. "As you may have observed, I am a great trencherman. Now shut her down."

He tested the air for half an hour and found it breathable. Then he emerged and we made our final dispositions.

On the following day I boarded the Hispanola, sailing from Liverpool for Boston. The mummy was hoisted on board, and a little while afterward Nikolai came to life within my stateroom. The voyage across the Atlantic was uneventful, and although my mummy caused considerable talk among the stewards, nobody suspected that it contained a very much up-to-date passenger. I had given instructions that the case should be shipped to Essayan's house; I marked the outside as though it had come from Berg, and having left Nikolai with a supply of water and some concentrated food, I bade him farewell. He had decided, at my instigation, rather to endure the discomfort of the long wait patiently, than to take a drug.

We arrived on Sunday. The case would be delivered on the following morning, Nikolai said, and the customs officers promised to hurry it through. I forgot what duty I paid; it was well worth it. On Monday night, about the hour of twelve, Nikolai was to emerge from the mummy case, select his statue and throw it down to me.

Then I remembered that the hour would be too early for the advent of the ash-barrel collector. I hit on a new plan. I would drive past the back of the house in sight of the watchman, in an automobile; I would pretend that the machine had broken down, and would stop in the street for repairs. No crowd would be likely to assemble at such an hour in that secluded district; and the watchman would be compelled to make the round of the house.

willing for everybody else to have theirs, but he will not enter into co-partnership with any religion—Chicago American.

Useful at the Races.

"Why did you pick Alpha to win that race? I never thought he would win."

"Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet. I figured that Alpha should naturally lead."

"See what it is to have an education!"

This plan I carried into effect. The banker was in the country. I had learned, and the house deserted. It would be the easiest matter to accomplish my scheme. Soon after midnight I drove up toward Essayan's house. I duly stopped the machine, uttered an exclamation of anger, descended, and burrowed into the ground beneath it. As I had anticipated, the watchman paused on his round.

"Broken down?" he inquired sympathetically.

"I'm not doing this for fun," I answered, with feigned anger.

He watched me for a while and then resumed his patrol of the house. The moment that he disappeared I sprang from under the machine, seized the blanket I had brought, and whistled twice, the appointed signal. Then, looking up, I saw Nikolai's head appear from an upper window.

Nikolai motioned with his hands; I spread the blanket and bowed myself to receive the weight of the statue. To my astonishment, however, I received, not what I had expected, but an oblate sphere, that hurtled heavily through the air and descended into the receptacle. I glanced at it hastily. It was the fore part of a female head—of course in marble.

I laid it down stupidly and glanced up again. Once more an object descended. This time it was a leg—a marble leg, worthy of an Apollo. I caught it and hastened beneath the automobile again, concealing my treasures, just in time to hear the watchman's tramp as he came round the

items into the machine. I looked up. Nikolai was throwing out a rope. I caught the end as he signaled me and waited, my heart beating fast, for his descent. He came down at a terrific pace and landed heavily upon the ground, his hands bleeding from the contact with the rope. A filthy white dust had settled all over him, giving him the appearance of a miller. He sprang into the machine.

"Let her go, Summers," he cried, and, even as he spoke, the watchman came back before his time and in an opposite direction. He had evidently suspected something. One glance at Nikolai was sufficient for his suspicions to leap into full activity. He snatched a whistle from his neck and placed it to his lips.

Before he could blow Nikolai had seized him by the throat and grasped his hands. "Into the auto with him, Summers," he cried in a low, penetrating whisper. "Give a hand." I pulled the struggling man inside. "Now let her go," Nikolai cried. "Hurry, man."

And then a lamentable aspect of our situation made itself manifest. The automobile had actually broken down. I had disarranged the gear in some manner. It would not stir. No sound came from the engine.

"Crank her, crank her," cried Nikolai, still struggling with the watchman, whose powerful strength was almost a match for his own. "Here! Take him, I'll start the engine."

He forced him into my arms and

Soon we should be compelled to halt. Multitudes took up the chase. We turned off along the Common, shot across the grass, and sped along the deserted glades beneath the old trees; and all the while the policeman followed us, riding now behind, now at our sides. We could not shake him off.

Suddenly a desperate expedient occurred to me. I turned, and, groping among the fragments of the dismembered statue, I found the leg. I seized it by the ankle, taking aim, flung it with all my might at our pursuer. It struck him squarely beneath the chin. He averted and toppled from his machine, and went crashing with it upon the ground. Nikolai pulled the machine to a standstill, sprang out, and picked up our useful weapon. He brought it back broken into two parts but still serviceable. The policeman remained stunned upon the ground.

Then, speeding up the machine, we regained the streets, and a few moments after were leaving the city in our rear as we tore out toward the country.

We were safe. But, looking at the pieces of the statue, I wondered how Nikolai proposed to sell them to Essayan.

"I shall not sell them to Essayan; I shall sell them in London to my agent Berg," Nikolai explained to me on the following day, as we sat together in our Boston lodgings.

"But Berg is an art expert; you can't deceive Berg," I exclaimed.

"Berg knows all the statues which he

had, in fact, been led to expect just such an attempt. It is believed that Mr. Essayan's art gallery was the object of the attempt. However, a careful examination by Mr. Essayan revealed the fact that the gallery was never entered."

A month later Nikolai and I were in London, in the guise of art agents from the Levant. We interested Mr. Berg in our new statue.

"Dug up near Candia, Crete," said Nikolai, in broken English. "The mutilated condition is ascribed to the fact that the statue was demolished and buried by an earthquake about the time of Augustus."

"It has been pieced together creditably," said Berg, examining it with extraordinary interest. "A truly remarkable piece of work. I should say that it had been made experimentally by one versed in the various schools of the civilized world about the time of Christ. Other statues, for instance, show the influence of some special school, but this head seems to have been modeled after the school of Phidias; here we have one leg of contemporary Cretan sculpture and its fellow of Roman work. Possibly a composite, prepared by pupils in the local school. As a curiosity it should be of vast interest; but I am not prepared to offer an exorbitant amount. How much do you want for it?"

"Two hundred thousand dollars, American," Nikolai answered.

"Call it a hundred and fifty thousand and I'll purchase it," said Berg.

Nikolai agreed reluctantly.

"By the way," he continued, when Berg had signed in Essayan's name, "is that the Mr. Essayan who received the mysterious empty mummy case last month, as reported in the art papers? I think I have a clue to the sender. Tell him to look inside and find whether there is not something written in English upon a piece of papyrus."

"I like to talk about the 'good old times' once in awhile, but I believe the new times are better. Compare the comforts of life and the facilities for carrying on farm work of the present day with those of 25 years ago and you will agree with me, I think. We are living in the best time and in the best country the world ever saw, but some of us have not yet found it out."

You can almost tell what kind of a farmer a man is by the rattle of his mowing machine. The best kept machinery makes the least noise.

Too many of us believe in co-operation of the kind that means: You help me and I'll help myself.

The man who can afford to dress his wife and daughter comfortably and well and does not is a sorry sort of a fellow.

God made woman's body the most beautiful thing on earth and he intended that it should be properly clothed and cared for.

Many a boy's heart has been hurt and his disposition soured by senseless and thoughtless criticism of his personal appearance and manners. The young heart is always sensitive to ridicule—the cruellest weapon that can be used—and it should never be directed against a boy or girl. Recollections of undeserved and thoughtless ridicule of dress, the result of poverty, 40 years ago, causes the blood to rush to our own faces to this day.—C. M. S.

Method of Trapping Eagles.

Every year thousands of Chinese go into Mongolia to catch eagles to use for furs. Tame eagles carried on their shoulders are used as decoys when certain spots are selected for the baiting of nests with Kenys or small fish. Other eagles then join the tame ones, and the nests are raised by the trappers.

"I am twenty-five," answered the young man.

"Well, I am seventy-five years old, and as you are only twenty-five years old I think that I will get to see the Lord sooner than you. I will hand him the dollar myself."—Kansas City Star.

Relic Highly Valued.

A handkerchief formerly belonging to Richard Wagner, with a dedication to the composer's bride embroidered on it, was sold for \$750 at Munich.

Preferred to Deliver It Himself.

Henry J. Waters, president of the Kansas State Agricultural college, tells of a young man who was collecting funds for a benevolent institution. He attempted to collect a dollar from an old man who was noted for his closeness. The youth approached the old man and stated his mission and asked for a dollar, saying he was collecting for the Lord.

"Collecting for the Lord?" asked the old man. "Well, young man, how old are you?"

Wanted Postage.

Frequently in the cities, according to the post office authorities, letters are held up because they have been stamped with foreign postage. Apparently many newcomers to this country, through ignorance, use their own country's stamps when they first arrive. But the mail doesn't get past the first sub-post office. The letters are held for postage.

Clumsy in Proportion to Her Size.

"Nuthin de maffah wid mah wife, sah," stated Brother Stookey. "dat is, 'cep'n' she's so clumsy. Weighs mighty high three hundred pounds, de lady do, and she's allus steppin' on de dogs or de children. Broke one o' de dog's legs yista'd'y, and spread 'out flat Booker T.'—he's de baby—out flat dis mawlin'. Cou'se, I don't s'pose she kin hep it, but needer kin de live stock. Durnah 'sackly what to do, but I's 'bout concluded to git a divo'ce. Dat dog was wif'n d' galls o' any

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BURIED TREASURES

Some Strange Tales of Hidden Gold and Jewels.

Pirates' Loot Is Elusive, But Not a Few Have Dreamed of Digging Spanish Doubloons From the Earth—Only Dreams.

What child is there who cannot recall hearing at mother's knee stories of buried treasures. And what child has not dreamed of digging from the damp, dark earth Spanish doubloons or golden nuggets? Nor were they in childish fancy tainted, though hid in some wretched pirate set for luckless sapsafars who came his way, the Kansas City Star states.

Down the generations has come the story of one who took his talents and buried them, and there is nothing to disprove the theory that he then but conformed to common custom.

A farmer digs a well, the drill strikes metal, and a pot of gold is unearthed. In the walls of a dismantled house a black box is revealed and its shiny treasure makes the finder a rich man. From New Haven comes the story of an Italian laborer, who, digging the foundation ditches for his modest home, disinterred enough golden guineas to clear his place from debt.

Few towns away from the prairie country but have their treasure caves, and veteran river men will point in passing to where some vessel treasure laden went to the locker of the fresh water David Jones, Esq.

At New London, Conn., townspeople still narrate a weird tale of treasure which disappeared from a Spanish vessel there 150 years ago. In 1753, to be exact, the galleon Stas, Jose y Elena, gold laden and bound from Mexico to Spain, was disabled in southern water and carried northward. After weeks of idle drifting, the boat was sighted by a relief ship and towed to port at New London.

When repairs had been made and the ship was ready to sail it was learned that from its hold the bullion had disappeared.

There was but one conjecture. The gold had been stolen and buried along the water front close by. Townspeople kept close watch, but no one ever came to reveal the hiding place.

Something more than half a century ago came there a seeress, who gave directions as to the whereabouts of the buried riches. Two youths gave credence to her powers and, their story goes on, on a murky night she led them to a cache where stood a chest marked plainly "Jose y Elena," but that when they tried to lift it the rusted handles broke away under their grip.

Abandoning the quest for the night, they returned the following day, but never again were they able to locate the mysterious box.

Not far from Buffalo an island in the Niagara river is said to be the trove of a French refugee and fairly dotted with boxes of jewels and pots of gold. Many prospectors have sunk their picks about the reputed site of the exile's cabin, but not one ever has discovered any treasure, save that once in 1888, at unusually low water, some coins dated 1537 were found at the very edge of the island.

It is known that Gardner's Island was once the rendezvous of buccaners, and many rumors tell of buried treasure there, long hidden toll of pirates.

Nor is the rumor of treasure trove confined to the Atlantic seaboard or the east, for from Oregon to Lower California beach dwelling folk cherish and retell the stories of their fathers to the little folks, who dream of growing up and finding the great stores of gold along the Pacific coast.

Even along the lower Mississippi there is a tale of \$300,000 gold buried near Natchez, and a classic of Colorado is the legend of Peg Leg Smith, whose vast wealth died with him for all the world is concerned, no one ever having located the cache of the one-legged miser who did his trading with nuggets of huge size.

Out in the Three Hills regions there are some who still seek the cache where Peg Leg hoarded up his wealth—some indeed have perished in the search—but no one ever found the rumored gold.

Nearer home there is the wartime tale of buried silver teaspoons stacked to the brim with family jewels and American gold coin and left in ditches hastily dug, where owners, frightened before the soldiery of the Civil war which came foraging.

Exceptions.

Footie, the comedian, dined one day at a country inn, and the landlord asked how he liked his fare.

"I have dined as well as any man in England," said Footie.

"Except the mayor," cried the landlord.

"I except nobody," said he.

"But you must!" screamed the host.

"I won't!"

"You must!"

At length a petty magistrate took Footie before the mayor, who observed that it had been customary in that town for a great number of years at least to "except the mayor," and accordingly fined him a shilling for not conforming to ancient custom. Upon this decision, Footie paid the shilling at the same time observing that he thought the landlord the greatest for in Christendom—except the mayor, Christian Register.

Foe of the Short Cut.

"Where did the phrase 'the longest way' in often the shortest way home originate?"

"I don't know," replied the man with a motor. "Probably with a traffic policeman."

Parental Pride.

"So your youngest baby has learned to walk!" said the admiring relative.

"Walk, nothing!" exclaimed the fond parent. "Some of the steps it takes look exactly as if it were inventing a new fancy dance."

